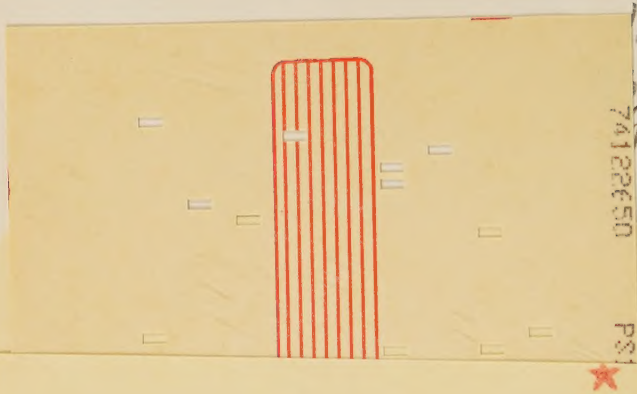

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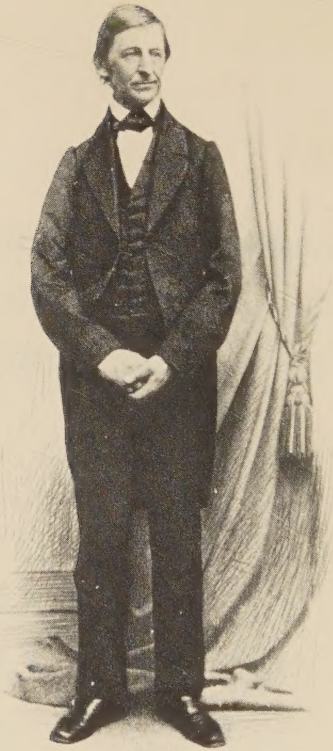

Ralph Waldo Emerson

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN RALPH WALDO EMERSON AND HERMAN GRIMM

EDITED BY

FREDERICK WILLIAM HOLLS

KENNIKAT PRESS
Port Washington, N. Y./London

KENNIKAT PRESS SCHOLARLY REPRINTS
Dr. Ralph Adams Brown, Senior Editor

Series on
LITERARY AMERICA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
Under the General Editorial Supervision of
Dr. Walter Harding
University Professor, State University of New York

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN RALPH
WALDO EMERSON AND HERMAN GRIMM

First published in 1903
Reissued in 1971 by Kennikat Press
Library of Congress Catalog Card No: 74-122650
ISBN 0-8046-1298-6

Manufactured in the United States of America

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Among German prose writers and critics, during the nineteenth century, the name of Herman Grimm must always be found in the foremost rank. Known outside of Germany best by very faulty translations of his lives of Michelangelo and Raphael, both of which are, however, masterpieces of biography as well as of art criticism, his fame in his own Fatherland rests even more securely upon the six volumes of his essays, his exquisite paraphrase of the Iliad, and his lectures on the life of Goethe, delivered at the University of Berlin. As a most competent judge, Professor Kuno Francke, has well said,[1] "He is philosopher, art critic, and literary historian in one, — an interpreter of the spiritual ideals of mankind, whatever form they may have assumed or to whatever age

[1] In Glimpses of Modern German Culture, page 99.

they may belong." Again,[1] "He has the magic gift of making all things seem animate. By a word, by a mere interjection, he transports his reader to the remotest times and lands; the strangest sights he makes familiar; he gives us a sense of being at home with the mighty shades of history."

The elegance, vigor, and sprightliness of his style, as well as the thoroughness of his knowledge, and his almost unerring insight and critical judgment, have combined, even now, within two years of his death, to give him an unquestioned place among the classics of the German language.

The facts about his life are few and simple. He was born January 6, 1828, as the son of Wilhelm Grimm, the younger of the distinguished brothers Grimm, whose fairy tales are household words the world over. After studying law, he devoted himself to literature, married Gisela von Arnim, daughter of

[1] Page 111.

Goethe's Bettina, and for years led the life of an independent scholar, until he was appointed, in 1872, Professor of the History of Art at the University of Berlin. He resigned this position in 1893, and thereafter lived quietly in the fourth story apartment on the Matthäikirchstrasse in Berlin, which for many years was a famous meeting place of the choicest spirits who resided in or visited the German capital.

It was in this modest but extremely tasteful home that the writer was privileged to make the acquaintance of Herman Grimm, and to listen frequently to his charming conversation, full of reminiscence and *Lebensweisheit*, during the last years of his life; and it was on Thursday, June 13, 1901,— just three days before his entirely unexpected death, — that the conversation turned once again upon that feature of Grimm's career which makes him so peculiarly interesting to Americans, namely, his part in the introduction and interpreta-

tion of Ralph Waldo Emerson to the German people.

In his essay on Emerson written in 1861, and included in his first series of fifteen essays,[1] Grimm relates how he first became acquainted with Emerson's works as follows: —

"At the house of an American friend, some years ago I found Part One of the Essays of Emerson, accidentally lying on the table. I looked into the book and read a page, and was really astonished not to have understood anything, although I felt considerable confidence in my knowledge of English. I asked about the author. I was told that he was the first writer of America, — very clever (*geistreich*), but sometimes somewhat crazy, and that quite frequently he could not even explain his own sentences. Moreover, that no one was so highly regarded as a character and as a prose writer. In brief, the opinion was so strong that I looked into the vol-

[1] Fünfzehn Essays, Erste Folge, page 428.

ume again. Some sentences impressed me as being so suggestive and enlightening that I felt an impulse to take the book along, and to examine it more carefully at home. I find that it is a great thing if a book tempts us to such a degree that we resolve, without compulsion, to look into it, — especially today, when it is necessary, by reason of a certain instinct of self-preservation, to remain upon the defensive to the uttermost against both men and books, if we are to preserve our time, our mood (*Stimmung*), and our own thoughts. I took Webster's Dictionary and began to read. The build of the sentences seemed to me very unusual; soon I discovered the secret. There were real thoughts; there was a real language, — a true man whom I had before me, — not a — I need not enlarge upon the opposite, — I bought the book. Since then I have never ceased to read in Emerson's Works, and every time that I take them down anew, it seems to me that I am

reading them for the first time. . . . I read the essay entitled Nature, and as I continued, sentence after sentence, I seemed to feel that I had met the simplest and truest man, and that I was listening to him as he was speaking to me.

"I did not ask whether he was clever (*geistreich*), whether he had an object; whether he wanted to prove this or that thought by his sentences. I read one page after another. It is possible that it was all confusion, but it did not seem so to me. I followed his thoughts, word for word, — everything seemed to me to be old and well known, as if I had thought or foreboded it a thousand times, and everything was new as if I was learning it for the first time. Whenever I had had the book in my hands for a time, my sense of personal independence revolted spontaneously. It did not seem possible to me that I had given myself captive in such a manner. It seemed to me that I was de-

ceived and betrayed. I said to myself, this man must be a man like all others, must have their faults and doubtful virtues, is probably vain, open to flattery, and moody, — but when I read his sentences again, the magic breeze seemed to touch my heart anew; the old worked-out machinery (*Getriebe*) of the world seemed to be freshened up, as though I had never felt such pure air. I recently heard from an American who had attended Emerson's lectures, that there was nothing more impressive than to hear this man talk. I believe it. Nothing surpasses the voice of a man who expresses from the depths of his soul that which he considers to be true. . . . It is necessary to live in the great world in order to appreciate and understand great characters. Emerson is connected with the greatest men of his country, — a country which has grand politics, whereas we had none up to this day. Thus, Goethe was connected in his time with the choicest spirits of the nation,

— the men who had harmoniously lifted themselves to such a height that the entire people recognized their supremacy. We need not only a light to illuminate a great circle as a lighthouse, but also a tower from the top of which the light itself becomes properly visible."

Of the only occasion when he met Emerson, Grimm writes as follows:[1] —

"In the spring of 1873, I saw him in Florence. A tall spare figure, with that innocent smile on his lips which belongs to children and to men of the highest rank. His daughter Ellen, who looked out for him, accompanied him. Highest culture elevates man above the mere national, and renders him perfectly simple. Emerson had unassuming dignity of manner, — I seemed to have known him from my youth."

These facts and views were re-told and elaborated by Grimm in the most interesting manner. In order to illustrate

[1] Fünfzehn Essays, Dritte Folge, p. xxii. See also Cabot's Life of Emerson, ii. p. 662.

his story he showed the writer nearly all of Emerson's works in their first editions, as sent to him by the author, every one with a cordial inscription. He then went on to say, almost carelessly: "I had a few extremely interesting letters from Emerson, and some years ago, when I was looking through my old papers, I collected them and presented them to the Goethe-Schiller Archives in Weimar where they now are. I think however that they ought to be published, and I wish you would do me the favor of taking copies of them, and of publishing them in America." It is needless to say that this unexpected invitation was gladly accepted on the spot, but it was suggested that Grimm's own letters ought to be included in such a publication, not only for the purpose of throwing light on what Emerson might have written, but also for their own intrinsic worth. To this Mr. Grimm assented, and immediately sat down to write out the necessary cre-

dentials for both Weimar and Concord, and we parted with the promise on the part of the guest to see him the next week after returning from Weimar. The following Monday morning the writer called upon Geheimrath Dr. Suphan in the beautiful Goethe-Schiller Building at Weimar, and handed him the letter of Herman Grimm, of whom he was an intimate friend. As he saw the handwriting his face changed color, and he silently pointed to a newspaper with a dispatch announcing briefly that Herman Grimm had been found dead in his bed on the morning of the day before, — Sunday, June 16, 1901.

The letters of Emerson were soon found, and permission to have them copied was readily given. Among them were found two letters to Gisela von Arnim, afterwards the wife of Herman Grimm, which are also included in this collection. Likewise Dr. Edward Waldo Emerson has very courteously

searched the papers of his father, with the result of finding the four letters from Herman Grimm which are here translated.

Grimm's interest in America was great, even apart from his admiration for Emerson. He was a particular friend of the most distinguished ministers and ambassadors of the United States at Berlin, notably George Bancroft and Andrew D. White. He took great interest in the educational and intellectual development of this country, and he was especially impressed, as well as pleased, by the American appreciation of Goethe, — a feeling which he felt to be greater by far in this country than among any other English-speaking people. He was a vice president of the Germanic Museum Association of Harvard University, and took great pride and interest in its work.

On the occasion referred to above he presented to the writer a copy of his lectures on Goethe, with an inscription

which is doubtless the last word he ever wrote about America as follows: —

Die Dichtungen und Gedanken Goethes haben von Deutschland nach America eine feste Brücke über den Ocean geschlagen.

[The poetry and thoughts of Goethe have constructed a firm bridge across the ocean from Germany to America.]

HERMAN GRIMM.

Surely all friends and admirers of Ralph Waldo Emerson may congratulate themselves that he found such a fitting interpreter to a friendly and intellectually kindred people.

I

GRIMM TO EMERSON

I. GRIMM TO EMERSON.

BERLIN, *April* 5, 1856.

VEREHRTER HERR, — Die Abreise Mr. Al. Thayer's giebt mir die Gelegenheit einige Worte an Sie richten zu dürfen. Vor einem Jahre lernte ich Ihre Schriften kennen, welche seit dieser Zeit immer wieder mit neuer Bewunderung von mir gelesen werden. Überall glaube ich meine eigenen, geheimsten Gedanken wieder zu finden, die Worte sogar, in denen ich sie am liebsten ausgedrückt haben würde. Von allen Schriftstellern unser Tage scheinen Sie mir den Genius der Zeit am Tiefsten zu verstehen, und unsere Zukunft am deutlichsten zu fühlen. Es macht mich glücklich Ihnen dies sagen zu können.

Ich erlaube mir, diesem Briefe einige meiner Aufsätze und Gedichte beizulegen. Ich thue es nicht, um von Ihnen einer Dank dafür zu empfangen, — ja, ich denke nicht einmal daran, dass Sie sie lesen werden. Es ist mir aber eine grosse Genugthuung dennoch sie Ihnen

I. GRIMM TO EMERSON.

BERLIN, *April* 5, 1856.

HONORED SIR, — The departure of Mr. Alexander Thayer gives me the opportunity of addressing a few words to you. A year ago I first became acquainted with your writings, which since that time have been read by me repeatedly, with ever recurring admiration. Everywhere I seem to find my own secret thoughts, — even the words in which I would prefer to have expressed them. Of all the writers of our day you seem to me to understand the genius of the time most profoundly, to anticipate our future most clearly. It makes me happy to be permitted to say this to you.

I have permitted myself to enclose with this letter some of my essays and poems. I do it, not in order to receive thanks from you, — indeed, I do not even think of your reading them, but it is, nevertheless, a great satisfaction to

zu übersenden, es macht mich der Gedanke stolz, dass Sie in Ihr Haus und Ihre Hände kommen.

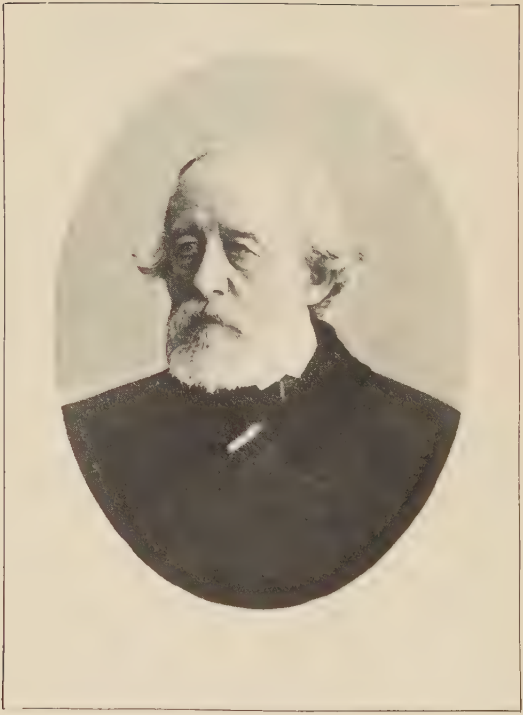
In wahrer Hochachtung und Verehrung der Ihrige,

HERMAN GRIMM.

me to send them to you. The thought makes me proud that they will come into your house and into your hands.

With true veneration and esteem,

Yours, HERMAN GRIMM.



Herman Grimm

II

EMERSON TO GRIMM

II. EMERSON TO GRIMM.

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS, 29 *June*, 1858.

DEAR SIR, — When Mr. Thayer long since brought me your letter, with Armin and Demetrius and the pieces contributed by you to the Morgenblatt, I should have at once expressed to you the surprise and pleasure I felt, — but that Mr. Thayer assured me that he should soon return to Germany, and would carry my letters of acknowledgment. And ever since, from time to time, I have heard again that he was on the point of going. This fact is the only palliating circumstance I can offer on this tardiest reply to your goodness. The delay has also made the few critical words I once thought of writing down impertinent, and I can only now recall how happy I was in the proffered sympathy of a scholar bearing your honored name, and well proved by what I read worthy to bear it.

It was an easy work of love to read the dramas, the poems, and the essays in the Morgenblatt. I found special interest, perhaps somewhat accidental,

in the Demetrius. For the translated Essay on Shakespeare, — I am proud to be introduced to Berlin under conditions of so good omen, and not a little proud to read myself in German at all. It is cheering to know that our fellow students, lovers of the same muses, work in one will, though so widely sundered, — and the more, because facilitated intercourse suggests to each the hope of seeing the other. I am grown to the stationary age; but who knows but the westward tendency, which seems to be impressed on the whole Teutonic family, will one day bring you to us! As Mr. Thayer generously offers me room in his trunk, I gladly use the opportunity to send you a copy of all my books in the corrected edition. By and by, I hope to send you a chapter or two of more permanent interest.

With all kind and grateful regards,

R. W. Emerson.

Herman Grimm, Esq.
Kindness of A. W. Thayer, Esq.

III

EMERSON TO THE FRÄULEIN GISELA VON ARNIM, AFTERWARDS THE WIFE OF HERMAN GRIMM

III. EMERSON TO THE FRÄULEIN GISELA VON ARNIM, AFTERWARDS THE WIFE OF HERMAN GRIMM.

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS, 29 *June*, 1858.

I have received — it is already some months since — the welcome gift of your Dramatic Works in two volumes. I cannot tell you how pleasant was to me this token from one of your name, and, since I have become acquainted with your thoughts, this token from yourself. I had been now for fifteen years an admirer of your mother's genius. All her books, I believe, are on my shelves, and I had eagerly learned what now and then a rare traveller could tell me of her happy personal and family relations. But no traveller could tell me so much good as this little pair of books you send me has told, — of noblest culture still found in her house, and that best kind of genius which springs from inspirations of the heart. I am charmed with the Trost in Thränen above all; for the choice of subject indicates high sympathies, and it is almost a test by which the finest people

I have ever known might be selected, — their interest in Michelangelo and his friends, Vittoria Colonna in chief, so that I dare to believe myself already acquainted with you, and very heartily your friend. You shall not let your muse sleep, but continue to draw pictures provoking a legitimate interest, by showing a heart of more resources than any other.

Lest I should make quite no return for your goodness, I have confided to Mr. Thayer for you a few numbers of our Boston Magazine, in which I sometimes write a chapter.

May I ask of you the favor to offer my respects to your mother, the Frau von Arnim, and to thank her in my name for many happy hours she has formerly given to friends of mine and to me, through her writings. With renewed thanks for your goodness, I am, with the best hope, and with great respect, Your friend,

R. W. Emerson.

To the Fraülein Gisela von Arnim,
Berlin.
Kindness of A. W. Thayer, Esq.

IV

EMERSON TO GRIMM

IV. EMERSON TO GRIMM.

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS, 9 *July*, 1859.

MY DEAR SIR, — I have been too much and too long your debtor. But I will not tire you with excuses which fate made, and which words could not help or adorn. It is much that I have felt that I was dealing with one who could well afford me as much time as I wanted. Now I have been reading over your letter, and your Morgenblatt, and your Essays, and am warmed into such thankful kindness, that the time more or less seems not important. I have read the first Canto of the Cimbri and Teutons, which gives high assurances of power. The only question I ask, and, in this case, with impatience, is, "How many years does my poet count?" For, if you are still young, you will carry it very far, — with such aplomb, such reserves, and such mastery of your means. But, in our distracting times, the writers falling abroad with too much information amassed upon them, it needs the irresistible drive-wheel of early manhood to overcome the forces of disper-

sion. But I will allow you more years than you have, as I choose to ascribe to you the rare felicity of carrying into maturity the heat of youth, and so I augur "a new morn risen on mid noon" to your people. I have just been reading, with great content, the paper on Michelangelo in the Essays. The views taken are all wise and generous; and to me also the contribution from Raczynsky is new and most welcome.

But I give you fair warning that, as I alone in America, at this day possess this book of yours, I intend to use my advantage. I advise you to watch me narrowly. I think I shall reproduce you in lectures, poems, essays, — whatever I may in these months be called to write. I have already been quoting you a good many times, within a few days, and it was plain, nobody knew where I became so suddenly learned and discerning.

I like well what you say, that, when you are at liberty, you will come and see us. After the fine compliments you pay me, I might well think twice of allowing you to undeceive yourself. I

shall pay you the higher compliment of entire trust. I shall not run away. You and I shall not fear to meet, or to be silent, or to prize each other's love of letters less, because we can be modest nobodies at home. Come and see our quiet river, and its skiffs, our woods and meadows, in this little town, whose chief contribution to the public good is, that every farmer sends milk and wood to Boston.

A few friends I have here, who are well worth knowing, if you will stay long enough to let the affinities play. I have found that this personality is the daintiest ware with which we deal, and almost no ability is any guarantee of sympathy, unless fortune also aid in the lack of counterparts. I have a hope as of earliest youth, since your friend Gisela von Arnim has written me such welcome sketches of her friends, and taught me to thank and prize them as mine also. Another person sent me the Morgenblatt containing your friendliest critique on Emerson. I must say, in all frankness, that your words about me seem strangely overcharged. That

such freedom of thought as I use should impress or shock an Englishman, or a churchman in America, is to be expected. But this same freedom I ascribe habitually to you Germans. It belongs to Goethe, Schiller, and Novalis, throughout, and I impute it to your writers whom I do not know: and I know not what whim of rhetoric I may have to thank, that leads you to overprize my pages. Well, I suppose I must wish your illusions will last, until I can justify them by some real performing.

I was sad to read, in the Journal you sent me, the death of one of those who should never die, — and untimely for me, who was just coming into relations with her nearest friends, which, could they have been earlier, would have strangely mixed dreams and realities.

I pray you to persevere, in spite of my silences and shortcomings, in sending me, now and then, a leaf written or printed. I hope I shall not be always ungrateful. My little book, long delayed, which I call Conduct of Life, I mean to send you in the autumn, and

an enlarged, and, I hope, enriched edition of Poems. Yet it is not books, but sense and sympathy, which I wish to offer you.

Yours affectionately,

R. W. Emerson.

Herman Grimm.

V

EMERSON TO GISELA VON ARNIM

V. EMERSON TO GISELA VON ARNIM.

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS, 10 *July*, 1859.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — You must have long ago believed that your letter had failed to reach me — no; there is more Providence in the world than that so much and so precious good will can miss of its mark. Thanks for the frankness and bravery, as well as the wisdom, of these pages. They call me out, and are such a surprise, that I shrink a little before so much sincerity. In reading your letter, I felt as when I read rarely a good novel, rebuked that I do not use in my life these delicious relations; or that I accept anything inferior and ugly. I owe you, therefore, a high debt, as exiles ever do to those who speak their native language, and think, for a time, we will never speak the speech of the streets again. But you must repeat and continue your good deed, to keep me in my good resolutions.

There is much to think of, much to speak of, in your letter, and, though you have been frank, you wake more curiosity than you satisfy.

I am piqued by your account of your habits of thought, and, when I try to translate yours into mine, I am not sure they correspond. To what you say of your habits of creation, I listen warily; but perhaps I do not know the like. You would rather know something of your friend's life than what thought occupies him. I hope it is no language of despair, grown out of the failures of our fellows. One hears so much called "thought" which is not thought, but only the memories of a torpid mind, that we say, Tell us rather of your corn-barn or your shoestring. But I confide, that, if my friend could give me his thought, it is the only gift, and carries all others with it. No age, no experience makes the hunger less. I have the same craving, and the same worship for a new thought as when my first intellectual friendships gave wings to my head and feet, and new heavens and earth. Yet I could well believe, as I read Queen Ingeborg, that you do not like ghosts, but real men and women. And that you think with such forms, and not with counters. That you make

so much of your friends is also the habit of a noble soul; and, since life admits of friendship, why should we ever suffer it to be cheap and apathized? Thanks again that you have confided to me tidings of your companions. Berlin shall be to me henceforth a noble and cordial city. And the invitation you send me to visit it gives me new rights in Europe.

I am a bad traveller, and, every year, am a little faster tied to my own nook and cell, by tasks unperformed, and by solitary habits, and, especially as regards Germany, by a despair of talking in a language which I can only read, and not pronounce, and much less speak.

But your challenge makes a kind of daily possibility to my dream. I too could heartily wish to send you friends of mine who deserve to see you and to be seen of you. I gave a letter long since to Elizabeth Hoar, a dear friend of mine, and who should have been, had he lived, the wife of my brother Charles, but he died many years ago. She is now in Italy, or in Switzerland, and

the war may prevent her reaching Berlin. Should she come, you will find her a woman in whom much culture from books has not weakened the strength or the delicacy of her native sentiment. She shares my love for your mother's genius. There was lately also in Germany a friend of mine, whom I could dearly have wished you to see, Mrs. Caroline Tappan. These two would give you two styles of New England women, that might suggest to you, better than almost any others, the range of our scale. But I fear she is in Paris, and already perhaps meditating a return home, though I had written to her not to leave Germany without seeking to see you. She did not go to Berlin.

I read your plays, and find them interesting, — which is to say much, for I lack, I believe, a true taste for that form, and wish always that it were a tale instead, which seems to me the form that is always in season; whilst the drama, though it was once the right form, and then was again right, yet seems to die out from time to time; and, in these days, to labor with much

that is old convention, and is so much deduction of power. Certainly it requires great health and wealth of power to ventriloquize (shall I say?) through so many bodies; whilst, in the novel, only that need be said which we are inspired to say, and the reliefs and oppositions take care of themselves. But, in Germany, I can well see, the drama seems to cling about the intellectual heart, as if it were one of the "prime liete creature" that Dante speaks of, and could not be ignored.

You must thank my young translator, of whom you speak, for her labor of love, though the "glued book" you seem to have sent me never arrived. Neither did the Hungarian poems, Petöfi's, which you praise. Herman Grimm's Obituary Notice of your mother reached me from him, and was every way important. I mourned that I could not earlier have established my alliance with your circle, that I might have told her how much I and my friends owed her. Who had such motherwit? such sallies? such portraits? such suppression of commonplace? Con-

tinue to befriend me, nor let my slowness to write, which I will not make worse by explanation, chill your flowing generosity, which I love like sunshine. If you will write me such another letter as you have written, perhaps all my ice will go, and I shall suddenly grow genial and affable. Ah! how many secrets sleep in each, which only need invitation from the other to come forth to mutual benefit.

With the highest respect and regard,
Yours, R. Waldo Emerson.

VI

GRIMM TO EMERSON

VI. GRIMM TO EMERSON.

BERLIN, 21 GRABENSTRASSE,
October 25, 1860.

VEREHRTER HERR, — Hätte ich Ihnen so oft geschrieben als ich schreiben wollte, so würden Sie viel Briefe von mir haben. Zuerst als ich vor länger als einem Jahre den Ihrigen empfing, wollte ich Ihnen dafür danken, denn ich war stolz darauf, dass Sie an mich gedacht und mir geschrieben hatten. Ich unterliess es aber weil sich zuviel Dinge aufdrängten, von denen ich hätte reden müssen, und von denen doch wieder, wenn ich es thun wollte, zu reden unmöglich war. Die Krankheit meiner seligen Schwiegermutter nahm damals schon den gefährlichen Character an, der das Ende herbeiführte. Dann trat der Tod ein, dann die darauf folgende Abspannung meiner selbst, dann die Krankheit und der Tod meines Vaters, nach dem ich mich selbst kurz vorher mit Gisela von Arnim verheirathet hatte, vor der Sie nicht wussten, dass sie meine Frau werden würde, und seit dem folgte eins nach dem andern, das mich

VI. GRIMM TO EMERSON.

BERLIN, *October* 25, 1860.

HONORED SIR, — Had I written you as often as I intended to do so, you would have many letters from me. Primarily, when more than a year ago I received yours, I wanted to thank you for it, for I was proud that you had thought of me and had written to me; but I omitted to do so because too many things seemed to crowd in, of which I would have had to speak, and of which, nevertheless, had I wanted to do so, it would have been impossible for me to speak. The illness of my departed mother-in-law showed even then its dangerous character, which brought about the end; then her death followed; then came my own physical collapse. After that, the illness and death of my father, coming soon after I had married Gisela von Arnim, of whom you did not know that she was to become my wife, and since then one prevention followed the other. All this made me so in-

abhielt. Ich war so unfähig dadurch, Ihnen den Brief zu schicken den ich schreiben wollte, dass ich selbst mein Buch über Michel Angelo ohne einen begleitenden Gruss an Sie absendete.

Auch jetzt ist es eigentlich noch beim Alten, es ist als sollte ich nicht wieder zu der Ruhe kommen, nach der ich mich so sehr sehne; denn mein Onkel Jakob kränkelt seit dem Tode seines Bruders, und in alles, was ich denke und thue, spielt die Sorge um die Zukunft hinein, die unabänderlich bevorsteht. Im Augenblicke steht es besser mit ihm; er hat sich ein wenig von dem kalten Fieber erholt, an dem er den Sommer über krank war. Doch ist kein Verlass auf diese Besserung, denn er ist alt, im 77sten Jahre steht er, und selbst wenn er gesund und frisch wäre, müsste man auf den Verlust gefasst sein.

So sind denn die letzten Jahre eine Ausnahmezeit für mich gewesen. Ich möchte Ihnen nur sagen, wie oft ich während dem ihre Bücher aufgeschlagen und tröstende Beruhigung daraus geschöpft habe. Sie schreiben, dass jeder der ihre Worte liest, denken muss,

capable of sending you the letter which I wanted to write, that I even sent you my book about Michelangelo, without an accompanying greeting.

Even now there is really no change for the better. It seems that I am not to attain the rest for which I am longing so greatly, for my Uncle Jacob is in indifferent health since the death of his brother, and into all that I think and do there enters care for the future which is facing me inexorably. At the moment he is better; he has convalesced somewhat from the chills and fever from which he suffered during the summer, but there is no reliance to be placed upon this convalescence, for he is old. He is in his seventy-seventh year, and even if he were healthy and vigorous it would be necessary to be resigned to his loss.

Thus the last years have been an exceptional period for me. I only wish to tell you how often during this time I have opened your books and how much comforting ease of mind I have drawn from them. You write so that every one reading your words must think that

Sie hätten an ihn allein gedacht, — man empfindet zu stark die Liebe, die Sie zu allen Menschen hegen, — man meint, es sei unmöglich dass Sie nicht nur einzelne bevorzugte damit gemeint, und man zählt sich diessen zu. Welch' ein Glück für ein Land einen solchen Mann zu besitzen ! Wenn ich an America denke, denke ich an Sie, und America scheint mir so das erste Land der Erde. Sie wissen wohl, ich würde das nicht sagen wenn es nicht in der That meine innerste Meinung wäre. Der Gang der Dinge und Ereignisse erscheint mir wie der Rythmus eines schönen Gedichtes wenn ich ihre Worte lese, und das Gemeinste löst sich auf in nothwendige Schönheit durch Ihre Beobachtung.

Ich habe versucht mein Buch über Michel Angelo in Ihrem Sinne zu schreiben, jedes Blatt so, dass es die Probe hielte wenn ich es Ihnen vorläse. Im August habe ich das Buch an Sie abgeschickt, und hoffe dass es an Ihre Addresse gelangte. Ich weiss wie unvollkommen es ist. Nehmen Sie den guten Willen für die That und wenn Sie einmal Zeit haben, lassen Sie

you had thought of him alone. The love which you have for all mankind is felt so strongly that one thinks it impossible that you should not have thought of single preferred persons, among whom the reader counts himself. What a happiness for a country to possess such a man! When I think of America I think of you, and America appears to me as the first country of the world. You well know I would not say this if it were not really my innermost conviction. When I read your words, the course of years and events appears to me like the rhythm of a beautiful poem, and even the most commonplace is dissolved into necessary beauty through your observation.

I have endeavored to write my book about Michelangelo in this sense — every page, so that it would stand the test if I could read it aloud to you. I sent the book to you in August, and hope that it has reached your address. I know how imperfect it is, but please take the good will for the deed, and if you ever have time let me know what

mich wissen was Sie daran zu tadeln finden. Ich möchte diese Bemerkungen für den zweiten Theil benutzen, mit dem ich gerade beschäftigt bin. Cornelius, dem ich es widmete, hat in diesen Tagen in Rom seine Tochter verloren. Er steht nun ganz allein im hohen Alter, es ist ein trauriges Schicksal, verbittert noch durch die Vernachlässigung, die er hier erfährt und durch seine Trauer um die Zustände in Rom, an denen er als Katholik tiefen Antheil nimmt. Ich für meine Person kann mich aber nur freuen, dass die grosse Römische Lüge, an der Deutschland so lange zu leiden hatte, immer mehr in sich zusammenfällt.

Leben Sie wohl. Meine Frau grüsst Sie tausendmal. Wollen Sie uns eine grosse Freude machen, so schicken Sie uns ein recht ähnliches Portrait von Sich. Ich habe einige erlangt, die mir jedoch nicht ähnlich scheinen.

In Verehrung und Dankbarkeit

Ihr HERMAN GRIMM.

(Gestern sind wir gerade ein Jahr verheirathet.)

you find to censure. I should like to utilize your remarks for a second volume upon which I am now engaged. Cornelius, to whom I dedicated it, lost his daughter in Rome recently. He is now entirely alone at great age. It is a sad thought, embittered also by the neglect which he experiences here, and by his sorrow over the condition of affairs in Rome, which concern him as a Catholic very deeply. I personally can only rejoice however that the great Roman lie, from which Germany has had to suffer so long, is more and more collapsing in itself.

Farewell. My wife greets you a thousand times. If you wish to make us happy, please send us a very good portrait of you. I have succeeded in getting some which no longer, however, seem to me to be good likenesses.

With esteem and gratitude,

Your HERMAN GRIMM.

(Yesterday we had been married just one year.)

VII

EMERSON TO GRIMM

VII. EMERSON TO GRIMM.

CONCORD, *June* 27, 1861.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — You will think there never was such prodigal sloth as mine. To have such friends within easy reach by the steamer's mails, and to postpone letters (to write which is its own reward), and, by postponing, to brave the chances of time and harm on either side, — looks foolhardy, in a world where decay is so industrious. You have behaved so nobly too, on your part, as to leave my sloth and irresolution without excuse: for you have sent me such gentle reminders, in the shape of new benefits, that my debt grows from month to month. The Life of Michelangelo did not reach me until long after it was announced by your letter. I feared it was lost, and ordered a copy from Berlin. Your own book arrived at last, and, soon afterwards, the ordered copy, and there is now a third copy, in our Boston Athenæum; so that America can begin to read. The book is a treasure, — in the hero, the treatment, the frank criticism,

the judicial opinions, and, — what I value most, — the interior convictions of the writer bravely imparted, though more seldom than I could wish, as in the first pages, or in the interpretation of M. A.'s sentence or Raffaelle's diligence. The book has research, method, and daylight. I hate circular sentences, or echoing sentences, where the last half cunningly repeats the first half, — but you step from stone to stone, and advance ever. I first knew from your Essay the passages from Francesco d' Ollanda, and now you tell me the Florentine Government will print the Buonarroti Papers. Mr. Cobden, the English Member of Parliament, was in Boston two years ago, and told me he had been shown by the Buonarroti family, in Florence, a considerable collection of MSS. of Michelangelo. I hope, now that liberty has come, or is coming to Italy, there will be all the more zeal to print them. Michael is an old friend of mine. A noble, suffering soul; poor, that others may be rich; indemnified only in his perception of beauty. And his solitude and his opulent genius

strongly attract. I miss cheerfulness. He is tragic, like Dante; though the Erythræan Sibyl is beautiful. I remember long ago what a charm I found in the figure of Justice, on Paul III's monument, in the Vatican, and wished the legend true that ascribed the design to Michael A. Yet he has put majesty, like sunshine, into St. Peter's. We must let him be as sad as he pleases. He is one of the indispensable men on whose credit the race goes. I believe I sympathize with all your admirations. Goethe and Michael A. deserve your fine speeches, and are not perilous, for a long time. One may absorb great amounts of these, with impunity; but we must watch the face of our proper Guardian, and if his eye dims a little, drop our trusted companions as profane. I have a fancy that talent, which is so imperative in the passing hour, is deleterious to duration; what a pity we cannot have genius without talent. Even in Goethe, the culture and varied, busy talent mar the simple grandeur of the impression, and he called himself a layman beside Beethoven.

Yet I do not the less esteem your present taste, which I respect as generous and wholesome. Nay, I am very proud of my friend, and of his performance. Pleases me well that you see so truly the penetrative virtue of well-born souls. Above themselves is the right by which they enter *ad eundem* into all spirits and societies of their own order. Like princes, they have sleeping titles, which perhaps they never assert, finding in the heyday of action relations enough close at hand, yet are these claims available at any hour, — claims, against which, conventions, disparities, nationality, fight in vain, for they transcend all bounds, as gravity grasps instantaneously all ponderable masses.

Thanks evermore for these costly fruits you send me over the sea! I have the brochure on Goethe in Italy and that on the portraits and statues of Goethe. I persuade myself that you speak English. I read German with some ease, and always better, yet I never shall speak it. But I please myself, that, thanks to your better schol-

arship, you and I shall, one of these days, have a long conversation in English. We are cleaning up America in these days to give you a better reception. You will have interested yourself to some extent, I am sure, in our perverse politics. What shall I say to you of them? 'T is a mortification that because a nation had no enemy, it should become its own; and, because it has an immense future, it should commit suicide! Sometimes I think it a war of manners. The Southern climate and slavery generate a marked style of manners. The people are haughty, self-possessed, suave, and affect to despise Northern manners as of the shop and compting-room; whilst we find the planters picturesque, but frivolous and brutal. Northern labor encroaches on the planters daily, diminishing their political power, whilst their haughty temper makes it impossible for them to play a second part. The day came when they saw that the Government, which their party had hitherto controlled, must now, through the irresistible census, pass out of their hands. They decided to

secede. The outgoing administration let them have their own way, and when the new Government came in, the rebellion was too strong for any repression short of vast war; and our Federal Government has now 300,000 men in the field. To us, before yet a battle has been fought, it looks as if the disparity was immense, and that we possess all advantages, — whatever may be the issue of the first collisions. If we may be trusted, the war will be short, — and yet the parties must long remain in false position, or can only come right by means of the universal repudiation of its leaders by the South.

But I am running wide, and leaving that which belongs to you. Let me say that I rejoice in the union which allows me to address this letter to you, whilst I have my friend Gisela in my thoughts. To her, also, be this sheet inscribed; and let me entreat, meantime, that she, on the other hand, will not quite believe that she writes to me by the hand of her husband, but will, out of her singular goodness, use to me that frankness with which she already indulged

me with autograph letters. My only confidante in this relation is my daughter Ellen, who reads Gisela's letters and yours to me, with entire devotion, and whose letter to your wife (sent through Rev. Mr. Longfellow) I hope you have long since received. Ellen has facility — and inclination to front and surmount the barriers of language and script. My little book, Conduct of Life, I tried in vain to send you by post. So I sent it by Mr. Burlingame, our Minister to Austria, who kindly promised me to forward it to you. But the Austrian Government has declined to receive him, and I know not how far he went, or what became of the poor little book. You asked for my photograph head, and I tried yesterday in Boston to procure you something; but they were all too repulsive. Ellen had enclosed in her letter some scrap of an effigy. But I am told that I shall yet have a better to send. And so, with thanks and earnest good wishes to you and yours, I wait new tidings of you.

R. W. Emerson.

Herman Grimm.

VIII

EMERSON TO GRIMM

VIII. EMERSON TO GRIMM.

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS, 14 *April*, 1867.

MY DEAR MR. GRIMM, — Will you allow me the pleasure of introducing to you a young friend of mine, Mr. William James, a student of medicine at Cambridge. He has lately returned from South America, whither he accompanied Professor Agassiz in his scientific tour in Brazil. He goes now to Berlin, with a view to the further prosecution of his studies. His father, Henry James, Esq., an old friend of mine, is a man of rare insight and of brilliant conversation, and I doubt not you will find the son the valued companion that we hold him. He asks me rather suddenly for this letter, or I should make it the companion of one or two more that have long been due to yourself, and to my friend Gisela Arnim, to whom I pray you to present my affectionate salutations, with the promise to make to her soon a special acknowledgment of her letter, which, though addressed to my daughter, directly concerned me,

and of her book, on which I have much to say.

I remain your affectionate debtor,

R. Waldo Emerson.

Herman Grimm, Esq.

IX

GRIMM TO EMERSON

IX. GRIMM TO EMERSON.

BERLIN, MATHAEIKIRCHSTRASSE 5,
October 19, 1867.

VEREHRTER HERR UND FREUND, — Statt all der Briefe welche ich Ihnen, nun seit Jahren schon, in Gedanken geschrieben habe, ohne sie je auf's Papier zu bringen, sende ich nun durch Mr. Foote nur eine kurze Nachricht. Weshalb ich so oft schreiben wollte, brauche ich wohl nicht zu sagen. In all den schweren Stunden die ich in den letzten Jahren durchmachte : als die Mutter meiner Frau starb, als mein Onkel Jakob ihr folgte, und mein Vater, und in letzten Sommer, vor kaum drei Monaten, meine Mutter, war es mein einziger Trost fast, die Gedanken die mich erfüllten, zu Briefen an Sie zu gestalten, in denen ich aussprach was mir das Herz durchschnitt.

Und dann wieder unterliess ich es niederzuschreiben was ich gedacht hatte, und mir war zu Muthe als wüssten Sie es trotzdem.

Was hätte ich sonst zu schreiben? Dass ich Ihre Bücher immer wieder

IX. GRIMM TO EMERSON.

BERLIN, *October* 19, 1867.

HONORED SIR AND FRIEND, — Instead of all the letters which I have for years written to you in my thoughts, without ever putting them to paper, I now send you brief news through Mr. Foote. Why I wanted to write so often I hardly need tell you. In all the heavy hours through which I have passed in the last years — when my wife's mother died, when my Uncle Jacob followed her, and my father, and last summer, hardly two months ago, my mother — it was almost my only comfort to formulate the thoughts which filled me into letters to you, in which I expressed that which was cutting my heart in twain.

Then again however I omitted to write out what I had thought, but I had the feeling that you knew it nevertheless.

What else is there that I could write, — that I read your books again and

lese; — dass Ihre Briefe mich glücklich machten, und mir nichts lieber war als von Ihnen erzählt zu hören. Ich wüsste Niemand zu nennen, denn ich kennen lernen möchte, ausser Ihnen. Scheute ich meiner Frau wegen die Seereise nicht, so wäre ich längst gekommen. Allein sie würde die Fahrt hinüber nicht ertragen können.

Ich sende Ihnen durch Mr. Foote eine Kunstzeitschrift welche ich in den letzten beiden Jahren beinahe ganz allein geschrieben habe und jetzt aufgebe, weil mir die Zeit dazu fehlt. Ich sende Ihnen ferner, in der Hoffnung Ihnen eine kleine Freude zu machen, einen der ersten Abdrucke eines eben fertig gewordenen Kupferstiches, nach dem von mir in diesem Journal besprochenen anonymen Kopfe, der sich in Besitz eines meiner Freunde in der Schweiz befindet, und den ein Kupferstecher, Friedrich Weber, durch mich veranlasst, gestochen hat. Das 2te Blatt ist ein Portrait von Clemens Brentano, welches in seinen letzten Jahren ein Bruder meines Vaters, der als Maler in Cassel lebte, gezeichnet

again, that your letters made me happy, and that I like nothing better than to hear talk about you? I can mention no one whom I wish to know except yourself. If I did not dread the sea voyage on account of my wife, I should have come over long ago; but she would not be able to bear the voyage over to you.

I send you through Mr. Foote an art periodical which I write almost alone, for the last two years, and which I am giving up on account of want of time. Furthermore, I send you, in the hope of giving you a little pleasure, one of the first impressions of an engraving on copper which has just been finished, after the anonymous head which I had discussed in this periodical, which is in the possession of one of my friends in Switzerland, and which was engraved by a copper-plate engraver, Friedrich Weber, at my suggestion. The second sheet is a portrait of Clemens Brentano drawn and etched in his last years by a brother of my father, who was an artist

und radirt hat. Und drittens sendet meine Frau, mit vielen herzlichen Grüssen, ein Blatt ihrer Tochter, einen Stich nach dem ersten und letzten Gemälde eines jungen Malers namens Kachel, der kurz nach Vollendung desselben an der Schwindsucht starb, und dessen Vater, einen ausgezeichneten alten Mann, wir vor einigen Jahren in der Schweiz kennen lernten.

Will Ihre Tochter uns eine rechte Freude machen, so sendet sie uns dagegen ihr Portrait, und wollen Sie selbst das Ihrige dazu legen, so vervollständigen Sie unsere Sammlung Ihrer Portraits, deren wie eine ganze Reihe nun besitzen, die wir oft ansehen, als hätten wir Sie gekannt seit langen Zeiten.

Mr. James ist hier angekommen und gefällt uns sehr. Morgen Abend wird er bei uns Joachim, den berühmten Violinspieler kennen lernen, zugleich meinen besten Freund, und zugleich Denjenigen, der Ihre Gedanken zuerst mit in Deutschland ihrem ganzen Gewicht nach kennen lernte. Joachim und ich lasen Ihre Werke zu einer Zeit in Deutschland, wo ausser uns Niemand

in Cassel; and in the third place my wife, with many cordial regards, sends a sheet of her daughter — a shepherd, after the first and last painting of a young artist by the name of Kachel, who died of consumption soon after its completion, and with whose father, a most excellent old man, we became acquainted a few years ago in Switzerland.

If your daughter wishes to give me great pleasure she will send us her portrait, and if you will add your own, you will complete our collection of your portraits, of which we have quite a number, and which we often look at as though we had known you for a long time.

Mr. James has arrived here, and we are greatly pleased with him. To-morrow evening he will become acquainted at our house with Joachim, the celebrated violinist, — at the same time my best friend, and also the man who was among the first in Germany to become acquainted with your thoughts in the fullness of their importance. Joachim and I read your works at the time in Germany when besides us perhaps no

vielleicht sie kannte. Jetzt freilich kennen sie viele und lernen immer mehr sie kennen.

Ich sandt Ihnen vor einigen Monaten die drei Bände eines Romanes,[1] in dem auch von America die Rede ist. Was werden Sie dazu gesagt haben? Ich denke manchmal daran, denn der Effect einer solchen Arbeit bleibt doch immer ein problematischer.

Ich schliesse meinen Brief als hätte ich gestern geschrieben und schriebe morgen wieder.

Mit den herzlichsten Grüssen,

der Ihrige,

HERMAN GRIMM.

[1] "Unüberwindliche Mächte" (*Unconquerable Powers*), a romance by Herman Grimm, newly issued, 1902. Containing passages of great force and beauty.

one knew them. Now indeed many know them, and more and more are becoming acquainted with you.

A few months ago I sent you the three volumes of a romance in which America is mentioned. What will you have said about it? I think of it occasionally, for the effect of such a work must always remain very problematical.

I conclude my letter as though I had written yesterday and expected to write again to-morrow. With most cordial regards,

Yours,

HERMAN GRIMM.

X

EMERSON TO GRIMM

X. EMERSON TO GRIMM.

CONCORD, *April* 17, 1868.

MY DEAR MR. GRIMM, — Professor W. W. Goodwin, who fills the chair of Greek Language and Literature, in Harvard University, sails in a few days for Europe, with the intention to visit Berlin on his tour. He is an esteemed and accurate scholar, and though a native of this town, had his best teaching in Germany. I believe he has once met you, — many years ago. His present journey, I think, was first suggested by the delicate health of his wife, but I doubt not they are both in condition to use and enjoy the rest and the attractions of the tour. He knows enough of German, as well as of Greek, to have some right to visit Berlin: and I hope that both of my friends may be so fortunate as to see you, and to bring me new tidings of the health of my friend Gisela.

With affectionate regard,

R. W. EMERSON.

XI

EMERSON TO GRIMM

XI. EMERSON TO GRIMM.

CONCORD, 5 *January*, 1871.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — Your enduring kindness encourages me to ask your interest in a young countryman of mine, Mr. William E. Silsbee, an alumnus of our Cambridge, and now going to Berlin, to hear Law lectures. His parents are excellent persons here, — my friends, and they and I desire that he shall not be in Berlin without seeing Herman Grimm and — if happy stars conspire — my friend, Gisela von Arnim G. also. Meantime I send to you and to her perpetual thanks and benedictions. I duly received from you the brochure on Schleiermacher, and read with interest, though his was never one of my high names. For Goethe I think I have an always ascending regard. That book of Müller which you sent me, the Unterhaltungen, is a treasure which I have kept close by me, and only now have sent to a friend with advice to translate it.

I give you joy, the new year, on these great days of Prussia. You will

have seen that our people have taken your part from the first, and have a right to admire the immense exhibition of Prussian power. Of course, we are impatient for peace, were it only to secure Prussia at this height of well-being.

Yours faithfully,

R. W. Emerson.

XII

EMERSON TO GRIMM

XII. EMERSON TO GRIMM.

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS,
December 18, 1871.

MY DEAR SIR, — You have been my constant benefactor for many years, and relying on this native bounty of yours, I have charged my son Edward, who goes to Berlin to pursue his studies in Medicine, to pay his early respects to you, and to my friend, Gisela von Arnim Grimm, if, as I trust, she still remembers me, — and entreat your friendship and good advice in his new home. The boy has gone earlier to Berlin than I had expected, by a month, or this note should have reached you sooner.

But let me use the opportunity to say, that, though I have such a wicked habit of not writing letters, the best books and pamphlets have come to me from your hands, and have been carefully read by me with great advantage. The brochure on Schleiermacher was specially interesting, as I had read some volumes of Varnhagen v. Ense's Tagebücher, and wondered at the contrast of

the freedom within doors and the sad politics without. Now that my son is near you, I shall hope to communicate with you some more knowledge and with security of transmission on my part.

With affectionate regards,

R. W. Emerson.

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